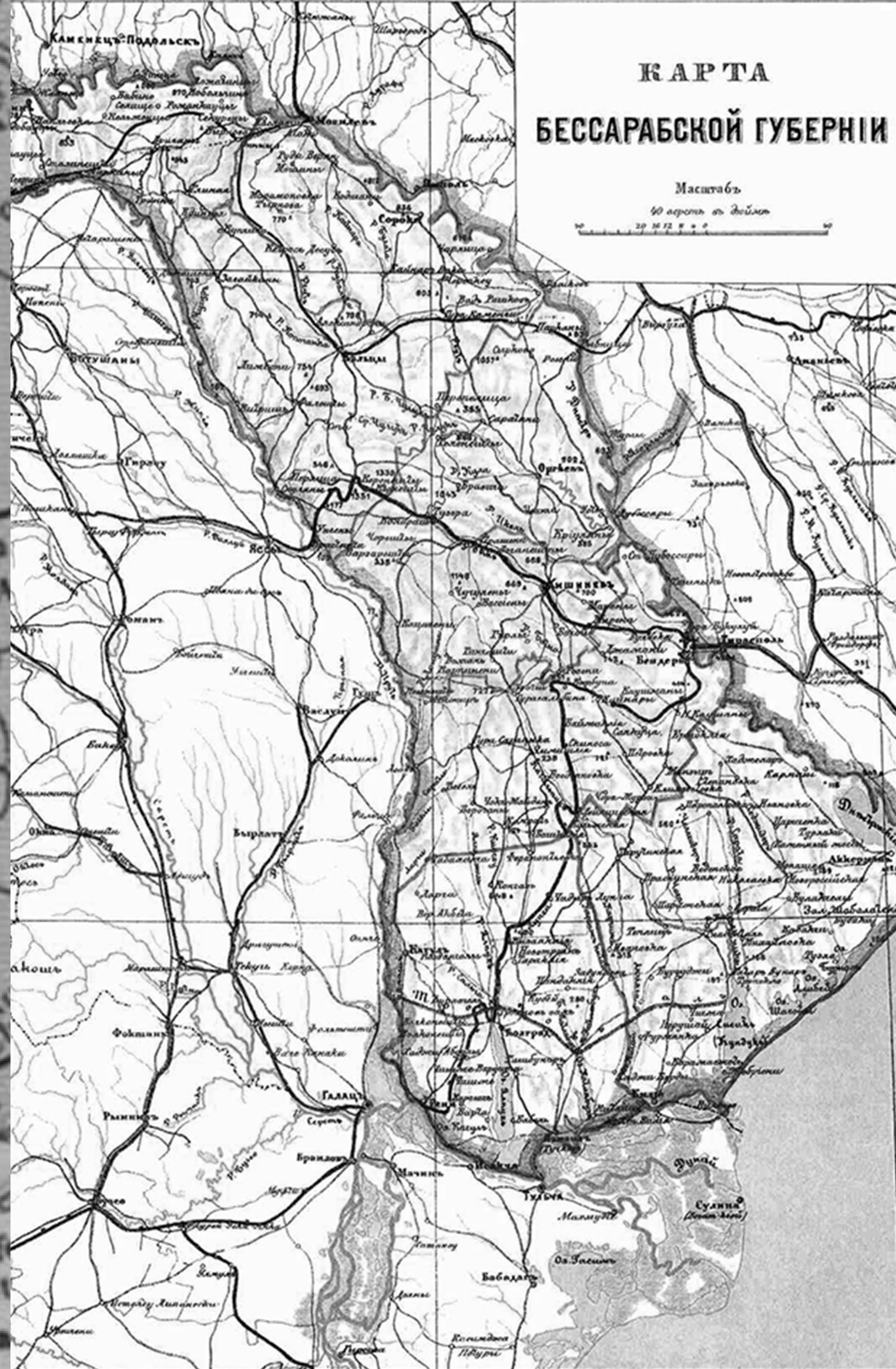
I USED TO SING THE INTERNATIONAL

by Jack Kant

"While reading the constitution on the bulletin board of the newspaper, a female member of the state committee of the Jewish Bund said to me, "That is not what we want, let us start a demonstration against it." We found a red piece of cloth, tied it to a long stick, and started to holler, "Down with the constitution, Down with the Czar." Soon a mob was following us. For a couple of blocks we screamed down with this and down with that, and down with everything, until a company of soldiers started to shoot at us. The state committeewoman and myself dodged into a store and became customers looking for something to buy."



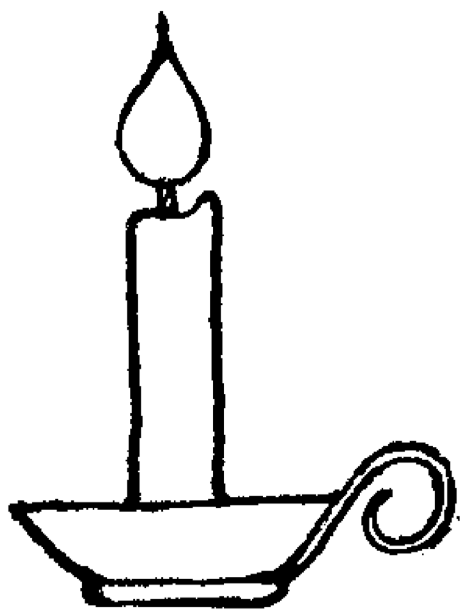

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Rovno
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Dnieper
Vinnitsa
Krementchug
Tarnopol
Kamenetz
Podolsk
Kolomea
Elizavetgrad
Dniester
Bug
Debreczin
Gross Wardein
Pruth
Bender
Akerman
Odessa
B. of Odessa
Braila
Bukharest


КАРТА
БЕССАРАБСКОЙ ГУБЕРНІИ
Масштабъ
40 верстъ въ дюймѣ
Кишиневъ
Бендеры
Галацъ

sacrifice altogether. He made my disgust with revolutionists and revolution complete. I lost faith in everything and everybody. My pessimism was at its highest peak.

In that state of complete pessimism, I came back to New York at the end of 1911. I did not like the capitalist system because of its greed for money and disregard for human misery and suffering. And I had lost faith in the socialists and revolutionists on account of Lenin. I got back into my lonely shell, and the wound that Lenin inflicted upon me with his lecture has never been healed. Up to this day, I can never believe anybody when they talk about idealism and idealists. Lenin killed my faith in idealists completely. And for that I can never forgive him. He had a magnificent brain, but a very cold heart. And now I imagine that all leaders are made of the same stuff.

In 1901 I changed my Jewish religion for socialism, which was a much stronger faith for me. If not for Lenin, I might have still kept that faith, but he broke it for me completely. And since 1911, I remained a man with a broken faith and a damaged soul.



EDITOR'S NOTE:

While we ourselves are anarchists, we are happy to present this obscure text written by a former socialist. His perspective on the Russian radical underground of the 1880s to the 1910s is extremelly valuable in these times of political violence.

Aside from a few geographical notes, we present an unaltered version of the original 1983 text.

INTRODUCTION

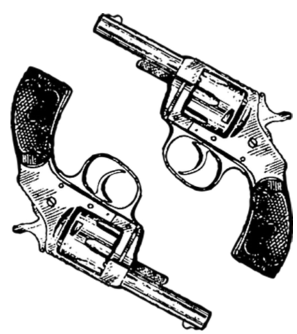
Jack Kant is my grandfather. He is a fascinating man who seems to be everything at once: a passionate revolutionary, a romantic believer in love, a painter, a writer, an actor, a folk dancer, and most of all, a talker. He remembers what he ate in Seattle thirty years ago and knows to the day how old he is. Although he was born in Russia in the 19th century, he is able to live in our modern world of computers and nuclear weapons without appearing to be any more confused than the rest of us.

This book is compiled from an autobiographical account written in 1979. It covers Jack Kant's life up to the time that he left Russia. With the exception of some alterations in sentence structure and spelling, I have not rewritten or changed it.

In his account, Jack Kant presents a simple and clear description of his experiences in Russia. He explains what it was like to live under the oppressive conditions imposed by the Czar, and he gives a beautiful picture of how he personally became committed to fighting back. He tells us about a society that was changing rapidly from peasant villages into an urban and industrial country. He gives us the day-to-day story that is often missing from history books and political theories. We learn from him how he became a revolutionary not just because of his personal beliefs, but out of a necessity to survive.

In that spirit, this book is for those who are trying to understand the past in order to fight for changes in our own society today. For others like myself, who are involved in the labor movement or in other struggles for social change, this story is an inspiration and a challenge.

Steven Kant
Olympia, Washington
July 1983



and say, "Oh to be young again," and be enthused with an ideal of Social Justice on all the earth, as I was then. What an exciting time that was.

The Year 1911

The year 1911 was a very important year in my life. It was a very sad year for me, and I was so disgusted with the whole capitalist system in the USA that I did not feel like putting down that disgust on paper. So now, in the year 1979, I am filling in that gap. My account may have a different flavor, but the facts are there.

I had not had a decent job since I went out on strike in 1910, so I was very dissatisfied. On top of that came the "Triangle Fire" in June 1911, where hundreds of workers were injured and killed. That event filled me to the brim with disgust, and I decided to leave that rotten system and go back to Russia to work for the socialist revolution.

On my way to Russia, I had to stop in Paris to get connections. I found the organization of the Jewish Bund in Paris shot to pieces. It had a dozens members and no intellectuals. They asked me, a man just coming from the US, to give them a talk about the conditions in Russia. I read the underground papers and was disgusted with the revolutionists. They were fighting among themselves like cats and dogs and trying to destroy each other instead of the Czar's government. I was so disgusted with the Russian revolutionists that I wanted to go back to New York, but I stopped in London for a while.

In London, Nickolai Lenin came to give a lecture. He was my idol when I was in Russia and he was the father of communism there. The first part of his lecture was magnificent when he analyzed the political conditions in Russia. And then he spoke about the revolutionists by the thousands. But when Lenin spoke about them, he spoke without feeling and without heart, as if the Czar was killing cattle or sheep, not his own comrades.

My heart revolted against his talk. That time has so adversely impressed itself upon my heart and mind that I can never forget about it. It made such a revolution in my thinking about idealists and revolutionists that not only did I not want to go to Russia to fight the Czar, but I wrote my sister to send me a ship's ticket to come back to New York. I had been ready to sacrifice my life for the Russian revolution, but Lenin killed my appetite for

and love roles. We found a girl of about nineteen who was willing to try, but claimed not to know how to make love. So who should be the teacher? I, of course. To tell the truth, though I was over twenty-one, I myself didn't know very much about love-making. My love to Nady was platonic, and about other girls I knew very little on account of being busy in the revolution. I started to teach her nevertheless. But how can you teach a girl about love-making without doing it in reality? We kept on learning it and doing it in reality until I left Russia a year later. My conscience bothered me a bit about loving Nady and making love to the girl at the same time, but it did not prevent me from making love to the girl just the same.

And so by hook or by crook we got a few girls to help us out in rehearsing about three or four Jewish plays in preparation for our appearance in public. But we never appeared in public. In the spring of 1909 the police started to look for our appearance in public. But we never appeared in public. In the spring of 1909 the police started to look for the delinquents in reporting to army duty. As three of our dramatic group were such delinquents, I among them, we left Kishineff in a rush, and thus ended my revolutionary and acting careers in Czarist Russia.

1909: Leaving Russia

It is interesting to make a summary of the almost eight years of my life in the revolutionary movement in Russia. In contrast to my previous life of working sixteen hours a day with no relaxation or enjoyment, those almost eight years of revolutionary activity have been the most exalted and most interesting years of my life. If the modern American youth could feel the excitement of working for an ideal of a perfect and just society, they would be better off than from their interest in sports and nonsensical entertainment. I really pity them when I see the stuff that they get excited about. When I used to sing The International, my whole heart and soul was in that song. Social Justie meant a whole lot to me. But what do they get enthused about? A prize fighter, a ball player, a wrestler. Their heroes are all intellectual dumbbells. My heroes at the time were Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, and all the Socialist elite of the time.

What I wouldn't give to be able to live over that exciting time again. But alas, at 92 and a half years of age, I can only yearn for that exciting time,

1886-1901: Childhood, School, and Work

September 20, 1886, I was born to a Jewish shoemaker in the provincial town of Kishineff [ed: now Chișinău, Moldova] in Southern Russia. That "blessed" event was not very pleasurable to my mother. I don't know what my father felt; I never asked him about it. But my mother, though I never asked her either, seemed to have a cold feeling towards me all of my life. But I don't blame her for that. When a young girl is compelled to give up a lover and marry a much older man than herself whom she does not love, you can't expect her to be pleased with the offspring she bears him. That I had to be the victim of such a combination was too bad for me. That I resented instinctively her cold feeling towards me is understandable. But when I analyze her situation I can understand her feelings, and I don't blame her for them. However, to me, the child that was the victim of such a predicament, the feeling of unacceptance by my mother was very painful and degrading to say the least. All my life I felt unwanted by my mother, unwanted by the whole world. I felt as if I were a stranger on this earth, unloved by anybody, barely allowed to exist, without welcome, an outsider in the scheme of things.

Nor did my condition as a Jew living among Russians help my lonesome feeling very much. At the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth the lot of Jews in Russia was anything but enviable. Not only did I have the feeling that I was not welcome in Russia, but I was glad that I wasn't killed. I lived through two massacres in Kishineff, the famous 1903 and 1905 pogroms, about which so much was written and nothing done to the Czar who instigated them.

The only redeeming feature to my unwanted birth was the behavior of my grandmother. Perhaps realizing that she herself had forced my mother into an unwanted marriage, and probably understanding that my mother resented me because of that, she tried to give me the affection I was lacking. Though she still lived with our family all her life and showered upon us a lot of love, for which I was grateful to her all the time, she couldn't fill the void I felt from my mother's indifference to me. I am still suffering from that coldness. I can never think of it but with sorrow, regret, and a feeling of forlornness. What is the use of shedding tears? I can't mend what was done to me unwittingly by two women.

And so I was born to a shoemaker in poor surroundings in an unfriendly atmosphere, and my tone of life was marked by those factors. I don't

remember a darn thing about the first five years of my life. But not a thing. I wrack my brain trying to get a glimpse of the first five years of my life before I started to go to Hebrew school, and no facts or occurrences appear to me. But after five years of age I began to get glimpses of my life in Hebrew school and with my father that make sense.

Apparently my father was not a bad sort of fellow. Until the time of his death, when I was aged seven, I remember him taking me to the Jewish theater which was then flourishing in Southern Russia, where I learned many operettas and folksongs that are still part of my bathroom repertoire. I can still see myself standing on the balcony of the theater enjoying the shows. But what I can't understand is why he used to call me inside the house and scold me when I tried to sing those songs in the courtyard before an audience of the tenants. I am still figuring out whether it was perhaps my incorrect singing that made him do it. My sense of pitch is not very good, though my sense of rhythm is pretty fair. Maybe that was the reason why he scolded me for singing in the courtyard. He himself was a good singer—he always sang at work. Anyway, whatever was the cause of his displeasure with my singing, I enjoyed the singing and the theater immensely, and still do to this day.

It was only a few years ago that I gave up singing in amateur choruses and acting in an amateur dramatic club. And not because I stopped liking it, but because I started to feel my heart going bumpity-bump before a performance, so I thought it would be better and healthier for my constitution if I stopped indulging in those activities. But I badly miss the singing and the acting. It gave me such a thrill, such a spiritual uplift, that it is hardly describable. Those activities were the things that I surely was grateful to my father for introducing me to. Maybe they are hereditary. Anyway, the experiences were pleasurable.

He also used to take me and my younger sister for hikes and hill-climbing. I can still see him standing on top of a hill with my sister (he must have carried her up) and coaxing me to keep on climbing and reach the top by myself. And until now, whenever I find the going in life a little tough, the vision of my father standing there upon the hill and coaxing me to climb is still before my eyes. It is worthwhile for any parent to realize that pictures like that can impress themselves upon the mind of a child and exert such a tremendous influence until old age. Little, I presume, did my father think that his coaxing me to keep on climbing would have such a tremendous influence upon my whole life.

in the masses. There were small groups of ardent revolutionists in every town, but the mass had gone back to its former way of life.

When I came back from the trip at the end of 1907 and reported to the combined committeeman the state of the organization, which he knew anyway, he advised me to widen my activity in a cultural direction and organize a Jewish dramatic group. I took his advice and started to organize such a group.

1907: Some Changes

So in 1908 I got myself a new activity. I worked as a tailor with the old boss for a living. I helped the state and city committeeman to do some revolutionary work as was necessary: a strike once in a while, or a lecture. Especially as a mediator in the strikes of the seamstresses was I good. As organizers and strike leaders, the girls were all right by themselves, but as finishers of strikes they were very poor. Their bosses were women who catered to the rich clientele of the city; they were very nervous beings. So when the nervous women bosses and the nervous women workers came together for a settlement of a strike, there was more talk and recrimination over small things than settlement of big issues. But when I came in to settle their strikes, I first had a talk with the girls and looked for the big issues. Then I went to the woman boss and tried to get the big issues first, and I compromised on the small issues as much as I could and put the parties together again. The women bosses liked me so much for my ability to straighten out their affairs with the girls that one even remarked that revolutionists are not so bad. Before I spoke to her, she was afraid to deal with me. But after I finished my deal with her she even liked me.

So I kept a little busy in the revolutionary movement, I worked at my job as a tailor, and at the beginning of 1908 began to organize a Jewish dramatic group. Five men from the revolutionary organization were easy to find. Though we all knew very little about drama and acting, we were willing to read and teach each other. As the organizer, I went for it in a big way. As much as I was interested in Karl Marx and Socialism before, because I needed that knowledge for my revolutionary activity, I now neglected it a little for the sake of reading all I could about the technique of acting and dramatic literature. I also started to look for female actresses. They were hard to find. One, married to one of our "actors," was a comic. But we needed girls to play dramatic

The pistol magazine was located in the shop of a tailor, so I worked there as a tailor. My job was mostly to get pistols from the contrabandist and occasionally to deliver some of them out of town if the demand was very heavy, because there were special men for delivery out of town and women for delivery of ammunition. The women used to carry 500 rounds of ammunition around their posteriors, sewed in a cloth container. The men carried 10 pistols on their upper body, six in front and four in back, sewed into a cloth container. It was an exciting job but not interesting. To walk a mile from the contrabandist to the tailor shop through the Vilna streets with ten pistols on my body was quite exciting, to say the least, but not very interesting. But to stay away from the organizational work in the movement, as it was necessary for the safety of the whole undertaking, was quite a sacrifice for me. I stayed on the job for a few months until I was accidentally arrested at my friend's house. I stayed only six days in prison in Vilna, and the police let me go because they couldn't prove that I was a revolutionist. But I couldn't go back to my old job, as I was a tainted man. So after a few weeks of not working and sometimes not eating, I went back to Kishineff where a job was always ready for me with my old boss.

When I came back to Kishineff in the autumn of the year 1907, the revolutionary organization of the Bund was only a skeleton. Many youngsters had become of military age and were supposed to go into the Czarist army, which they hated like poison, so they went to America instead. The Czar, after recuperating from the revolution of 1905 and 1906, and having now the rich people and liberals on his side because he gave them a constitution, became very tyrannical with the revolutionists. Many of them fled to America. And the Bund in Kishineff was shot to pieces as in all the other cities. Many students quit the organization and got married. There was only one intellectual; he was the state committee and the city committee at the same time. 1907 was the year when the reaction started in Russia. It lasted until the Czar's overthrow in 1917.

I also had to report for military duty. But instead I got myself a false passport and lived under a false name. As I was in Vilna and away from organizational work, I didn't realize what had happened to the organization. So when the man who was the state and city committee told me about the state of affairs, I asked his permission to take a ride through the towns of the state to try to revive their former revolutionary spirit. I took the ride but did not accomplish anything. At the end of 1907 the spirit of revolution was broken

These are the two best influences of my father. To my sorrow he died of the cholera when I was only seven years old. I am sure my life would have been quite a different one had he lived. Though he was only a shoemaker by trade, he was very learned in Hebrew. He was born in Palestine and compelled to study to become a rabbi. As he had no inclination for the rabbinate, he ran away from Palestine to Constantinople and became a shoemaker. Then he roamed around all over the Orient and Russia, to the dismay of his family. They disowned him so strongly that even after his death, they did not want to help out his widow and kids who remained almost penniless. And as he changed his second name when he became a Russian subject, and as my mother couldn't remember his former second name, I was unable to locate my father's family who must be scattered all over Palestine and perhaps Turkey. How many times in my life did I yearn to go to Palestine and locate my relatives, but finances and circumstances were always in my way. So I am still without a father's family. When I was young I used to think quite a bit about it. Now, at old age, I have given up the idea of looking for my father's family, but I am curious just the same.

By all accounts of my father's dashing exploits in the fields of romance, roaming, gambling, and drinking, he must have come from an interesting family background. That I would like to meet now some of his old friends and hear the stories about him is understood. But all his friends are dead, his family is unknown to me, and the stories I did hear about him from my mother and his friends after his death might have been distortions anyway. So I gave up the idea of getting a true picture of my father. Whether he was all the things they described I can't verify now, though it is intriguing. But that he influenced my life in the short span he lived with us is certain. I am only sorry he died so young. If he had lived, I am sure I would have had a better life.

And so at the ripe old age of seven years old I became the head of the family. According to the Jewish custom the oldest male becomes the master of the family in religious ceremonies. And I had under my sway a mother with three kids, a grandmother, and an aunt, all living together and I the master. But I must have been a kind ruler, for they all called me a very endearing name--"Yankele." And as I was a very good scholar, I learned quickly the elaborate rituals of the religious ceremonies. It used to give me a sense of importance and solemnity to sit at the head of the table and perform all those various ceremonies. That feeling of elation and importance lingered on with

me for a long time.

The only trouble was that there wasn't always enough to eat. When my father died he left a widow with four kids ranging in age from one and a half to seven years, and a hundred and fifty rubles in cash. That was enough money to feed the family for about two months. But what about the rest of the time? The poor young widow bought a couple of cows, moved out to the outskirts of town, and from the sale of the milk, and my grandmother's earnings as an attendant in a woman's bathhouse, they had to feed seven mouths. That the financial condition was tough is understood. And though my mother could have remarried—and she had many suitors because she was good-looking and sweet—grandmother did not let her. She even gave her a beating once in front of us kids, telling her that only an indecent woman would give her kids a stepfather and that it was the duty of a Jewish woman to accept her fate as a widow. My mother didn't remarry until way after we were all grown up and could take care of ourselves.

And if her condition was very hard on her, it was also difficult for me. As the oldest of the brood I had to protect them from the gangs of Christian kids that lived all around us. While my father was alive we lived in a Jewish section of the town and I never heard the words "Sheeny" or "Christ-killer" from the kids around me. But when we moved to the outskirts of the town on account of the cows mother bought to feed her brood with, the social atmosphere changed for us completely. The kids from the courtyard and the neighborhood managed to besiege our ground floor apartment while the grownups were away and holler at us, "Sheenies, Christ-killers, we will kill you all," while I barricaded the door and sat inside trembling for the safety of my sister and brothers and myself. Why they called us those names I could never figure out at the time, but it made me quite frightened and angry. I developed such a hatred for those Christian kids that once, while they called us those names even when the grownups were around, I picked up a stone and hit one of them in the eye. Of course he started to holler blue murder, and his mother screamed that I had murdered her son. When my mother, grandmother, and young aunt heard what I had done they all gave me the beating of my life. I suppose they wanted to appease the screaming mother more than to hurt me. I was a goody-goody boy that had never gotten a beating from them up to that time. And that was the only time in my life that I got a beating from them.

But with the Christian kids I had plenty of trouble and mostly on

my mother. And I engaged the revolutionary movement as before.

There was a change in the structure of the revolutionary organization. As the feeling for democracy was in the air, the membership demanded a democratic structure of the organization. But they couldn't get an entirely democratic organization, as the work still had to be done underground. So they got a partially democratic organization. The central committee of the Bund organized itself by the leaders. They appointed state committees. The state committees appointed city committees. And there the appointments stopped. The executive committee of every town or city was elected by the leaders of the different trade organizations. And there is where my trouble in the year 1907 began.

I was appointed executive board member all the previous years. But this year I had to be elected. I ran for election, and was elected. But there was a girl who also ran who was not elected, and she complained. She claimed to be more qualified for the job than I was, because she was a high school graduate and I was not. She was very attractive sexually and popular among the leaders of the different trades who were about the same age as she was. So she organized with their help a strike in the organization. They refused to call meetings of their membership until I was displaced on the executive by her. No amount of talking to them or coaxing helped any. It went on so for a few weeks, until the city appealed to the state committee to resolve the matter. The state committee appealed to my sense of duty and asked me resign and thus restore order in the organization.

I cannot describe the feeling of defeat. I was so used to being active in the executive committee and knowing everything that was going on in the organization. And here I was reduced to being a plain leader of the tailors. I couldn't take my new status very long, so I left Kishineff for Vilna [ed: in Lithuania] where I knew a very influential comrade of the Bund with whom I was imprisoned in the same cell in Kishineff. When I came to Vilna my friend told me about a job in the main magazine of pistols. These pistols were distributed in the ghetto to all defense organization of the Bund. When I approached the man in charge of the undertaking, he said the job was already filled. But I did not believe him. So I wrote three letters to three state committeemen in Kishineff and Odessa, asking them to write letters of recommendation about me to the Central committee of the Bund. They wrote the letters, and the man had to give me the job. This shows that even in underground organizations it is who you know that counts.

My misgivings proved right. I was a good organizer and good lecturer for small groups of people, but no orator for big meetings. When I couldn't fulfill my duties as an orator I asked the central committee to relieve me of my job as state committeeman. They said they had no one to relieve me. As I couldn't stand the strain on my unfitness, I wrote to my sister in Kishineff to send me some money to come home. I notified the central committee that I was going home because I couldn't take the strain anymore. And so, after four weeks in Lublin, Poland, I ended my job as a professional revolutionist. Another experience worthwhile to record in that year of 1906 is my volunteering to throw a bomb at anybody of importance in case of revolutionary necessity.

When I went home, I was afraid of the police and did not want to stay in Kishineff, so I went to Odessa. In the autumn of that year, the revolutionists organized many strikes and expected to end the revolution with a general strike of all the workers. But the general strike did not materialize, and the revolution flopped altogether, not to be revived until 1917.

While there were quite a few strikes in Odessa, the Jewish self-defense group to which I belonged had asked for volunteers to throw bombs at very important government officials in case they stood in the way of revolution. I was the first one to volunteer. But as the revolution flopped, they did not need my services. And to this day I can't account for my act. But I think I did it on account of Nady. She was then a member of the city committee of the Bund in Odessa. I had no occasion to meet her. But I was almost sure that she would read my name on the list of volunteers. I am almost sure that this was my subconscious motive for the act. I would do almost anything to attract her attention to me. My love for her never faltered. The act I presumed would bring me to her attention. Not that the act itself was my aim, but Nady's interest in me. She was the queen of my life then.

1907: Some Changes

The failure of the revolution left a scar on our ardor, but most of the youngsters did not give up. Some oldsters did. Many Jews went to America. I came back to Kishineff in spite of my fear of the police. The tailor I had worked for gave me back my job. I always went back to him when in Kishineff. It was almost my home. His wife was more motherly to me than

account of my two little brothers. I never played with those kids, but my little brothers couldn't keep away from them. And as they managed to get on each other's nerves and fights, and as my little brothers usually got the worst of it, I had to protect them and get into fights with the gang. That I got the worst of the bargain is also understandable, being one against a gang. So I developed a lifelong hatred against those Christian kids. My fantasies about the Messiah worked overtime. Many a time I imagined that I was the Messiah and had led the Jews out of Palestine. The nationalistic effect of those fantasies stayed with me quite a long time.

And so when I reached the ninth year of my life the question arose before my mother and grandmother of what to do with me. An orphan of nine could not live very long on the board of his mother. A way had to be found to shift him off that tired back of hers. As usual, both of them had different ideas. Grandmother wanted me to become a Rabbi. With her, religion and duty came foremost in life. I was kept in a Hebrew school in spite of the privation for payments. And as I was a very good pupil, grandmother's appetite was apparently more whetted on that account. But mother wanted me to go to the Jewish Public School and learn Russian also, so as to be able to become quickly a clerk in a store and get off her back as a mouth to feed. I had no say in the matter. I only remember standing before a Rabbi with a beard longer than himself and a pair of eyes and eyelashes that could scare the life out of anybody, let alone an undersized and underfed orphan of nine who was supposed to answer questions on the Bible as an aspirant to enter the Rabbinical Seminar. I couldn't answer those complicated questions satisfactorily, either from fright of the frightful-looking Rabbi, or from ignorance. Anyway, he flunked me. That was a blow to my pride. I was always considered a good and model pupil by my Hebrew teachers.

So mother got her chance to try my luck in the secular public school, and away we went for a test. I wasn't altogether prepared for the exam either. The little reading of Russian that was required I had picked up from reading store signs, and counting I had picked up from my father before he died. I squeezed in with a "C" and started to go to Jewish public school.

The first year in school was pleasant, delightful, and memorable to this day of my life, and all on account of my teacher. To this day I bless his memory for the kindly, considerate treatment I received from him. It seemed to me that he was goodness incarnate. I can still see him before my eyes, after so many years, with all his mannerisms and goodness, and with the love he

dispensed to all children. If teachers would only realize the amount of good they can do by being kind and considerate, how much better off mankind would be. Of all my Hebrew teachers I hardly remember any one of them. They were all so heartless, so devoid of consideration, believing only in "Don't spare the rod." And though I never had a beating from any one of them, yet I couldn't bear to see the pains they inflicted upon the other children with their corporal punishment and brutal treatment. But this teacher, I will cherish his memory for the rest of my life.

When the year in his class was over I was one of five that skipped a class. In all subjects I had a hundred except handwriting. In that subject my mark was only twenty. But notwithstanding that fact I was skipped. Then my troubles began. The new teacher was a disciplinarian. I was afraid to look at him. And besides, I needed more books and had no money to buy them with. My grandmother didn't want to buy them for me, because she was against my going to the secular school, and my mother couldn't afford to spend the money. So after a struggle for a couple of months without books I was finally obliged to quit the school. And that finished all my formal schooling in childhood.

This lack of formal schooling was the bane of all my life. It gave me an inferiority complex that I am still unable to overcome. Whenever I come among educated people I feel so deficient in schooling that I am afraid to open my mouth. Only my recent studies of psychology and philosophy have somewhat reduced my feelings of inferiority. Yet when I talk to a college-educated person, I feel as though I am talking to a superior being. Even my own college-educated boys I treat with some measure of deference because they have had a formal education. I know it is kind of foolish to feel this way. But considering my desire and aptitude for gaining knowledge and the frustration I suffered on account of the lack of it, I can very well understand my own feelings and actions. I feel like a mental cripple without a formal education. Of course, maybe I put so much value upon it because I haven't got it. Be that as it may, I made a vow, when my boys were born, that they would finish college no matter what. And they did, though I had to deny myself quite a lot. But it was such a compulsion with me, that nothing mattered but their finishing college. If I had had an education, my life wouldn't be as bad as it was.

After my school days were over at the age of ten, the question arose of what to do with me. I couldn't continue to eat without earning my keep. True, I was helping out in the grocery store that my mother now had, but

the few moments I emptied my revolver I will never forget. It was the first time that I shot at human beasts (looters and murderers) and the revenge was sweet. It gave me such a sense of power. But alas it as only for a few seconds. We couldn't fight the military might of the Czar with our small group of self-defense. The murderers we could shoot, but not the military power of the Czar that was protecting them. So we had to retreat and let the bands of murderers have their way.

I don't remember anything else extraordinary that happened to me in that year. I was very much occupied in the Bund with different jobs, and life was very interesting for me.

1906: Revolution

This was the year in which the Russian revolutionists expected to finish the revolution and the Czar, and these things not happen. But they affected my life quite a lot and made it very interesting. As we had a constitution, we were not so careful with our illegal meetings. So in the beginning of the year, I was arrested at such a meeting and spent three months and a day in prison. The extra day I spent there was because we organized a hunger strike in three days. So I had to spend an extra day in prison, and lived the three days of the strike on a piece of sugar which I happened to find in my cell.

After the release from prison, I was afraid to stay in Kishineff, so I went to Bialystok [ed: in north-eastern Poland] where I had a comrade who knew me well. When I arrived there he wasn't in town. As an orator he was riding all over the state propagandizing the revolution. I was advised by the organizer of the Bund in Bialystok to go to Warsaw, Poland, and await there the letter of recommendation when he came back from the trip.

In Warsaw, I had to wait two weeks for the letter. Apparently the letter of recommendation was so good that the central committee of the Polish Bund decided to send me to Lublin, Poland as a member of the state committee of the Bund. I had never had such a high place in the revolutionary organization. After all I was only a plain workingman, though "intellectualized" by reading a lot, and too young, not even twenty years of age. But they said that many active members were arrested there and they needed me. So I went with misgivings about my ability to be a state committeeman, and became a professional revolutionist. That is, I didn't have to work at my trade for a living because the organization paid for my upkeep.

1905: A Constitution and a Pogrom

Nineteen hundred and five was a historical year in Russia. The Czar, due to his army's defeat in Siberia by the Japanese and the turmoil caused by the revolutionists, had decided to give Russia a constitution. At the same time, he made pogroms (massacres) on the Jews all over the Jewish Ghetto. The day of October 5, when that happened, I will never forget. While reading the constitution on the bulletin board of the newspaper, a female member of the state committee of the Jewish Bund said to me, "That is not what we want, let us start a demonstration against it." We found a red piece of cloth, tied it to a long stick, and started to holler, "Down with the constitution, Down with the Czar." Soon a mob was following us. For a couple of blocks we screamed down with this and down with that, and down with everything, until a company of soldiers started to shoot at us. The state committeewoman and myself dodged into a store and became customers looking for something to buy. But in the street quite a few people were left dead from the fire of the soldiers. The blood of one girl that was killed on that occasion has haunted me for quite a while. She was the sister of one of our active members, and for some reason the blood spot where she fell dead never disappeared. As I had to pass that blood spot quite often, I had a kind of guilty feeling about it. And even now, 75 years after the fact, I still feel bad about it. As revolutionists we had to protest against the rotten constitution that the Czar had given us, especially the workers. That she was in the mob when we protested was not my fault. The Czar's army did the shooting and was responsible for her death. Directly we were not responsible for her death, but I felt uncomfortable about it nevertheless.

The second episode that happened the same day has impressed itself still more on my memory. It was the massacre of the Jews. Of course we did not expect a constitution and a massacre from the Czar in the same day. But since the first massacre of the Jews in Kishineff in 1903, the Jewish Bund had organized self-defense groups in every city and town where Jews lived. Of course, I was a member of this group in Kishineff since I came back from Paris. I had a revolver with me all the time, and at a moment's notice had to report to the place of need. I received a call for duty to the market place where the hooligans were looting the Jewish stores. About twenty-five of our self-defense were there and we started to shoot at the looters. Immediately, their military protectors started to shoot at us and we had to disperse. But

that was just the kind of labor that the rest of the kids could do. Besides, it wouldn't lead anywhere. A boy of over ten should be working at a trade if he is not going to school. As an apprentice he boards with his boss, and he is off of his poor mother's back. My mother wanted to apprentice me as a clerk in a store, a station quite a bit higher in the scale of social value than a plain worker, but luck wouldn't have it that way. An aunt of mine got married to a tailor, and that sealed my fate for the rest of my life. What can be more convenient than to be apprenticed to one's own uncle? It is a bargain for both parties. The uncle gets a devoted worker, and the nephew a relation for a master. But that part of the bargain didn't interest me very much at that time. What was new for me was the back-breaking work I had to perform for sixteen and more hours a day without a minute for rest, recreation, or play. We started to work from the moment we woke up until we went to sleep. No breaks in between for anything except eating. Only work, work, and work. My blood still boils in me when I think of the inhuman conditions I was subjected to at the age of ten and half. No life whatever but work. The four and a half years of life till the age of fifteen, when a new phase of my life began, are almost like a nightmare for me. I can hardly remember anything pleasant or interesting in those miserable years. Life at that time seems like a blank for me, a kind of dark age in my life's history. The only outstanding event of that period is the change of bosses I made. I exchanged my uncle for a distant relative who was reputed to be a better tailor and better boss. And so he was. Otherwise, the less said about that life of mine at the time the better.

When I see the kind of life our modern teenagers lead, I feel no compunction for being envious of them. The freedom, the carelessness they enjoy, the good times they have. Oh, why was I compelled to work and slave for sixteen and more hours a day in a dirty workshop without relaxation and without recreation? How stilted and miserable was my life at that time. How I curse an economic and social system where such conditions prevail. No wonder that at the age of fifteen, in the year 1901, I became a socialist with a vengeance.

1901-1909: Joining The Revolutionary Movement

When Marxism moved into Russia at the end of the nineteenth century, it found a very fertile field for its propaganda in the discontent of the Russian people with the Czarist regime. The socialists had a field day with their propaganda of freedom and social justice, especially with the Jewish masses who were compelled to live in ghettoes. Except for the highest landed aristocracy and the high dignitaries of the church, nobody was satisfied with the absolute rule of the Czar.

In 1901, when I reached my fifteenth birthday, I went to a secret meeting of the Jewish revolutionists. And that first meeting I will never forget to the end of my days. The speaker talked about freedom and social justice, which appealed to me as worker and Jew. His speech made a complete break in my mental and spiritual orientation and gave it such a direction that I am still under its influence. The mental outlook on the world I gained from that secret meeting has opened my eyes to the immense possibilities of social justice for all mankind. It gave me an ideal to fight for during the rest of my life. It was an ideal which gave me courage and inspiration to face all the imprisonments and sufferings I went through for it. I still look back to those years as the most enchanted of my life. Perhaps my young age had something to do with it. To be inspired with an ideal of universal social justice at the age of fifteen is to gain a goal in life which our modern pampered youth are sadly lacking. It gave me a direction which changed very little in all those years of my life. I am only sorry now for the loss of that feeling of inspiration that gave so much content to my life in youth. It inspired me with the following poem:

I Dream

I dream of a world
Where love is supreme,
Where women and men
Are happy and gay.

I dream of a world
Where beauty is queen,
With women and men

they were angry at me for letting them down by the compromise. They said that the bosses had put it over on me by giving me the wrong figures and that I fell for their bluff. Maybe the workers were right. Maybe I was a victim of misrepresentation by the bosses. But there was nothing dishonest or crooked about the settlement. I acted in good faith and with proper intent on the economic conditions of industry as presented to me by the bosses. I felt no guilt whatever about settling the strike by a compromise. After all, I was only eighteen years old, and I took the bosses at their word. But some of the workers couldn't see it that way. They accused me of not getting them what they wanted, and some of them were angry and stopped talking to me.

Their actions were very painful to me. Here I was sacrificing my life the workers' cause, and the same workers were just as unreasonable and selfish as the bosses. Maybe it was the fault of our propaganda. We told the workers that they had all the power in the world if they only wanted to use it. It made me start to think that the workers were not so good as I thought they were. To me at that time the world was divided into two classes: the bad, exploiting bosses and the good pitiful workers. For the workers, I was sacrificing my life to ease their lot. And that was the thanks I got from the workers. I don't remember any other experience that made me think about the fallibility of the workers. If I felt guilty about some misconduct towards them, I would perhaps not accuse them of ingratitude and selfishness. But I couldn't blame myself for any wrongdoing. So I blamed them for their misbehavior. And though this fact did not interfere with my work in the revolutionary movement at that time, it left a scar nevertheless upon my thinking about the working class. In my subsequent years that fact loomed quite large in my actions whenever I thought about working in the labor movement.

My type of man uses a wholesome approach to any problem or type of work. In my youth I could overlook a little ingratitude from some of the workers. But in my adult life that fact acted as a deterrent to my actions. Whenever I was thinking of entering the labor movement the question arose before me: is my sacrifice worthwhile? Will the workers be grateful for my work? And many a time I did not enter the active ranks of the labor movement on account of that.

The whole day, whenever I had free time from the convention, I debated the question with myself and my conscience. And finally I told him the next day that I would keep quiet.

But what a revolution that fact made in my thinking about the revolutionists, politics, and myself. Here I was with the highest opinion about the idealism of revolutionists and my own integrity, but look at the dishonest act we committed. It made a break in my integrity which I think has never healed. In my subsequent activities in the labor movement there were occasions when I was confronted with other necessities of compromise and quiet acquiescence, but I don't think any other time has impressed me so much as my first fall. It engraved itself so much on my memory, that even now, more than a half century later, I still can't forget it. And I have to laugh when somebody talk to me about honesty and integrity in politics, politicians, and idealists.

But apparently at that time it only gave me a rude shock, but did not break my revolutionary ardor. My work in the underground movement in Kishineff went on in the same channels as it did before the Convention, and I must have enjoyed my work immensely.

The Menshevik delegate running in our state of Bessarabia was Nady's sweetheart. Although I voted against him in the Convention, I don't think it was a grudge vote. At that time my heart was so much absorbed in the revolution that I am sure I had no conscious grudge against him. What my subconscious was doing at the time, I don't know. I am sure that my vote had nothing to do with my feeling. In fact I don't think I paid much attention then to my emotions. I was too much absorbed in the revolutionary movement. I saw Nady very little. She worked in a different part of the organization. It was simply a matter of principle and youth's impatience with the slow-moving Mensheviks that made me vote against him. We youngsters couldn't see the logic of the oldsters, those above twenty-five years of age. We wanted quick and fast results. So we elected a Bolshevik delegate.

Another incident happened in the year 1904 which affected my life and thinking quite a lot.

I conducted a strike of shoemakers and settled it by a compromise. Quite a common occurrence in any strike, but apparently not to the liking of some of the shoemakers. After the strike, I began to notice that some of the former strikers would turn away their heads when they met me and would not greet me. After an inquiry about the cause of such action, I was told that

As lovely as gods.

I dream of a world
Where man is a man,
No color or creed
To mark him as bad.

I dream of a world
Where freedom is king,
Where none is afraid
To speak as he thinks.

I dream of a world
Of love and of song.
A beautiful dream
My world that will come.

At that time, the revolutionary movement was my whole life. Within a half year of that memorable meeting, I became so active in the movement that when the first strike of the tailors took place for a twelve hour work day instead of sixteen or more, I was the assistant strike leader. Needless to say, the tailors were overjoyed with their victory. To stop working from waking up in the morning till going to bed—only a person who worked under those miserable conditions can appreciate the change. For me, it was a great opportunity to have time to read a lot about the revolutionary movement. Before the strike, the only time I had to read was when I went to the toilet, and I went there quite often. And I also read on Saturdays when Jews were not allowed to work.

At age sixteen, I was appointed as the leader of the tailors' revolutionary organization, because the previous leader had to flee town. I presume that I was given that job on account of utter devotion to the revolutionary cause; I had no interests in life but the movement. And so I spent 1902 in the absorbing work of the revolution until I was arrested on the eve of 1903.

A group of store clerks invited me to celebrate with them on the coming of the new year. But the Russian police prevented our celebration and landed us in prison instead. The shock of such a happening to us was

tremendous, especially to the clerks, who were mostly "mama's boys" of the middle class. Prison to them was more sinister than to me. I wouldn't have to work twelve hours a day. When I came out of prison I would have the aura of a seasoned revolutionary. But those clerks had a different outlook. Most of them were only flirting with the movement. Their economic and social status was not as bad as a workingman's. Their prospects in life were much brighter than mine, and they had many luxuries at home which I had never even tasted. No wonder they felt bad about the prison. I will never forget that first night of 1903 in the prison of Kishineff, Bessarabia. After the police had gone through our respective homes looking for incriminating material, with the folks at home mortified and humiliated, we were all thrown into a big room with a couple of big beds. Nobody slept a wink during that night. The lamentations of some of the clerks on the shame they had brought on their parents was heart-rending. One boy was the son of the Rabbi that flunked me for the Rabbinate Seminary. Of course at that time I had no thoughts of vengeful satisfaction—I was above such feelings when it pertained to a fellow revolutionist. After seven days were over they detained two of the gang who claimed to be the organizers of the meeting, and the rest of us they let out on parole until our case would be disposed of by the higher authorities in Saint Petersburg.

While waiting for the disposition of our case, and taking part in the revolutionary movement just the same, the infamous massacre of the Jews in 1903 took place in our town of Kishineff. The massacre enraged the feelings of all the world with its brutality and murderous stupidity. The revolutionists felt worse than anybody else, because we couldn't fight with those brutal gangs. The Czar's soldiers protected them from all sides. I will never forget that people can be so brutal. If we could only have penetrated that barrier of military rifles, we would have made mince-meat of those brutal murderers. But what chance have bare fists against sharp bayonets and loaded rifles? Even now, while writing about it, I am crying from that feeling of impotence I felt at that time. The Czarist government had answered the Jewish revolutionists with a massacre on all the Jews, a tactic calculated to scare the socialists and frighten the Jewish population away from the revolution. But in this case the Czar overplayed his hand. The shock of the massacre aroused the whole world against him. He showed what his brutal autocratic government consisted of. And the Jewish youth started to flock to the revolutionary organizations as never before, both for

it was quite an active life for me. And my radicalism was extreme. I leaned to that faction of the Jewish Bund which agitated for the immediate overthrow of the Czarist regime and also the capitalist system at the same time. The patience of us youngsters was not constrained by any logical considerations. And when the important Congress of the Russian Revolutionists in 1904 took place somewhere in Europe, where the cleavage between the Menshevik "Socialist" and Bolshevik "Communist" factions took place, the delegate from our state was a Bolshevik. No slow-moving Menshevik was good enough for us. We were split right in the middle. Seven voted for the Bolshevik and six for the Menshevik. The old guard, those about twenty, voted for the Menshevik, and the ones below twenty voted for the Bolshevik. We youngsters had no patience for slow-moving Mensheviks.

I think it will be interesting to relate an incident in that state convention which will illustrate the fact that even idealists are not above fixing figures when it suits their purpose.

Five hundred members were entitled to a delegate to the All-Russian Congress. But the whole state of Bessarabia didn't have so many members. The only ones that knew about it were the state committee members. So the committee had to do something about it. The city delegations had to report the numbers of members. The state committee couldn't raise the number of members in the small cities, because it wasn't located there, and the places were small anyway, but in Kishineff they could. The only obstacle was me, because I belonged to the city executive committee and knew the exact number of members we had. So I had to know about the scheme. An influential member of the state committee, who was running for the Congress as a Bolshevik, took me into another room and told me the condition we were in if we stated the exact number of members we had in Kishineff. We wouldn't be able to send a delegate to the Congress. And as our Bolshevik delegate was almost sure to win, we would lose a lot by our accurate statement. Would I be so good to keep quiet when they report the amount of members we have in Kishineff?

To describe the impact on me of that statement is beyond my ability. But the moment I can never forget. I remained speechless. I had never before been confronted with such a choice of actions. Apparently he noticed the bad effect he produced with his communication, so he started to argue with me about the necessity of the move, the advantage of it for our side, and many more reasons for my keeping quiet. I didn't give him an immediate answer.

1904: Back to Russia

When I came back to Kishineff, Russia, in the spring of 1904, I wanted to become educated. My lack of education had stared me in the face since I fell in love with N. There seemed to be one cry in my soul: to stop being a worker and become an intellectual. But how to accomplish such a feat? I approached the city organizer of the Jewish Bund for help and he gave it to me.

There was a fringe of Jewish students who were afraid to take an active part in the revolutionary movement for fear that it would interfere with their education and careers. But they would give lessons to workers in academic subjects gratis and thereby ease their conscience for not doing anything in the underground movement. So I took advantage of their eagerness to help and got four of them for Russian language, arithmetic, geography, and history. I asked my mother to give me meals only, so as not to be compelled to work twelve hours a day in the tailor shop. I also asked the city committee of the Jewish Bund to relieve me of any activity in the underground. I got my requests. So I plunged into the study of those subjects with a gusto for sixteen hours a day. And everything went fine for four months, until the police arrested a whole bunch of revolutionists. Then the city organizer notified me that my services were required in the underground.

The moment he told me about it I will never forget. It still stands clear in my memory. I felt as if a thunderbolt had hit me over the head. I had to give up my studies. I couldn't sponge on my mother's sacrifice if the motive for learning was there no more. So I had to go back to the shop.

Anyone who has aspired to educate himself as I did can feel the dissapointment and frustration I passed through. I hated the shop like poison. I wanted to become an intellectual in order to get away from the shop, to become as educated as N, and to acquire knowledge. And all those goals were knocked over the head by the Czarist police. My hatred for the Czarist government knew no bounds. I plunged into the underground work with a vengeance. I was appointed to the city executive committee. I was put in charge of the needle and allied trades. I was teaching socialism to groups of workers. I became a member of the self-defense, where we learned how to shoot in case of a Jewish massacre or revolutionary action.

My life in the revolutionary movement was very absorbing and interesting, in spite of my disappointment and frustration. At the age of eighteen,

organized self-protection, and vengeance for the Passover massacres.

We, the paroled prisoners, had to flee Russia right after that event. We got information through the underground that our case had been disposed of by sentencing the two imprisoned comrades to three years in Siberia and sentencing the rest of us to one year. So we left Russia in a hurry by the underground to Austria. In Lemberg, Austria, the revolutionary auxiliary to the Jewish Bund in Russia sent all the five clerks to the United States because they couldn't find any work in Europe of a result of the language barrier. But me they sent to San Gallen, Switzerland, where, as a tailor, I could find work even without knowing the German language.

And so my fate was different because I was a tailor. Had I come to the United States in 1903 my future life might have been much better than it was. But by staying in Europe I was induced by subsequent events to go back to Russia, and work again in the revolutionary movement for a few years, until 1909, when I finally landed in the land of political safety, the USA.

San Gallen, Switzerland, 1903. A peaceful, restful town, but how strange to a youth of not yet seventeen who didn't understand German and could talk only to the single Jewish tailor in town. What a boring life I led for the next three months after the excitement of the Russian revolutionary life. Who of you youngsters of the blessed land of plenty and fun knows the boredom and misery in a strange land with no one to talk to and no recreation? O youth of America, you don't know how lucky you are. If you were in my condition you would know how to appreciate this land of plenty and freedom. Well, I couldn't stand San Gallen more than three months; I soon went to Zurich, Switzerland.

I was only ten days in Zurich, but what a profound influence those days had on my future life. How longingly and reverently I look back on those ten days when I met my first love, Nadya. What Zurich did for me has colored my subsequent years with love, admiration, and reverence for the most lovely girl I ever met. Nadya has become the idol of my life. And though I could never get her as a wife because she was already engaged to an intellectual of my home town, I nevertheless worshiped her as an idol, as an ideal of womanhood and mankind. Whether all youths of seventeen feel about their sweethearts as I did, I don't know. But if they do, then that is about the most exalted time of life. What can compare to that feeling of joy and reverence at the sight of your idol? What deeper feeling can there

be than the love of youth? How thankful I am to that seventeen-year-old girl of Kishineff, Russia whom I met in Zurich for the first time, and who colored all my life with so much love and admiration for all womankind. Little, I presume, did she think, that that shy youth who looked at her so admiringly the first time he met her would be affected with her beauty and charm for all the days and nights of his life. But who in this great wide world can foretell the effects of his being?

And so my life was swayed now by two ideals: the ideal of socialism and social justice, and the ideal of love for Nadya. At the age of seventeen to be led by two such powerful emotions is very beneficial for a youth. No wonder I look back longingly to that period of my life. What dreams, what fantasies, what sweep of the imagination. Can life at seventy duplicate that state of being? Oh, if it could. To strive, to hope, to try to reach the heights of perfection, what more can lead to inspiration and exaltation. It is the poetic period of life. I would like to be in that period now. The glow and light of that period still warms my life.

When I heard that Nadya was going to Paris to study in the Sorbonne, I took the same train and also went to Paris. At that time in Europe freedom of travel from one country to another was really a blessing. And so I followed her to Paris. Work as a tailor I could get in any place, especially in Paris, where there was big population of Jews right in the middle of the city. The hours of work were also long, but who cared for that? So long as I was near Nadya, I would be able to see her, because we both belonged to the same revolutionary Jewish Bund that worked for freedom in Russia. She was a daughter of a rich man, one of the most influential men in our home town of Kishineff, yet she was induced to join the Jewish Bund and work for the social aims of the workers. The man who influenced her to become a socialist was an intellectual and much older than she was. But that did not prevent them from falling in love. Both of them were brought up in the best surroundings, well-educated, and well-matched. But I knew nothing about it. When I wanted to make my love known to her, I didn't have the nerve to her orally, so I wrote a letter to her. And the answer came back with the information mentioned above. The stoning effect of her letter I can still feel in my bones. I can never forget the feeling of despondency I lived through at that moment when I read her letter. I don't think the feeling will ever be eradicated from my memory. As young as I was, seventeen years, I must have felt in my whole being the tragic import of the words,





"Impossible to get what you want." How dejected and rejected I felt, and how I cried. I wonder whether I can trace my melancholy to that fact of rejection of whether it only aggravated a previous inborn state of melancholy. Anyway, my love for N did not subside. It became more ardent, perhaps on account of unattainability.

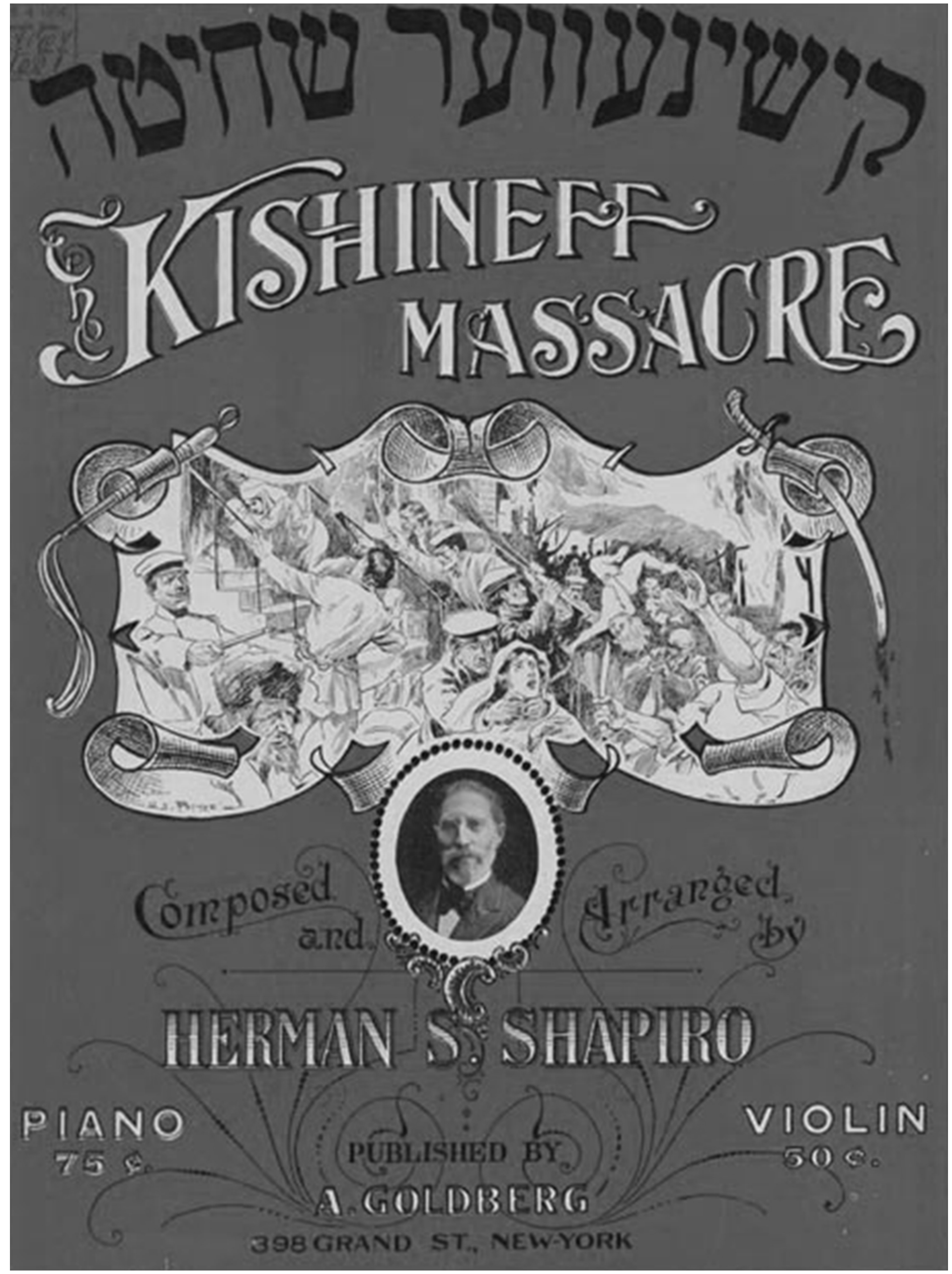
And so, at the age of seventeen, I was a rejected suitor. I came too late to the scene. Yet we had to meet, and be together, because we both belonged to the same organization. And the thought occurred to me that maybe if I were educated I would have a better chance with her. I wonder whether my desire for an education didn't get its impulse from the fact that I was not as educated as she was. Anyway I never stopped longing for an education since that fatal rejection. But I looked for education at that time only in the field of socialism and sociology. Marx's *Communist Manifesto* I studied all the nine months I was in Paris. Of course, that didn't make me an intellectual. And the wish to become one was paramount in my mind. Especially was my appetite whetted when I compared myself to N's lover, whom I knew well in Paris, and who was one of the influential intellectuals in the Jewish Revolutionary Bund. Maybe my desire was prompted by the unconscious wish to take her away from him. A foolish thought indeed. How could I, a poor workingman, ever become an intellectual? The abyss between those two classes was so great at that time that it was foolish of me indeed to entertain such a desire. But who was ever in love and wise at the same time? The wings of love make us soar to such heights, especially at seventeen, that sense at such a time is out of bounds. And so I dreamt and hoped and desired, and remained at that state of a workingman until now. But in Paris I was imbued with the idea that I must become educated. The desire led me nowhere. I was still a worker, a refugee from Russia, an ardent revolutionist, and rejected suitor.

Meanwhile, Nady's father heard in Russia that she was spending more time in the revolutionary movement than in the Sorbonne, so he threatened to cut off her allowance if she didn't come home. A foolish move indeed on his part. In Paris at least she was safe from the Czarist police. When I heard about it I offered to share my wages with her, which was of course also foolish on my part. I made just enough to sustain myself. And here I wanted her to share it with me. My motive in doing that I don't remember now. But looking back 65 years after that gesture, I presume it was promoted by the desire to bind her to me. However, she was much smarter

than I was. She thanked me for the generous offer and rejected it. But the way she handled my feelings endeared her more to my heart, and I became more attached to her.

When she left Paris for Russia, my life became empty. I also wanted to go back to Russia. And when the Czar proclaimed an amnesty in the spring of 1904 for all major political offenses, on account of a new baby the Czarina blessed him with, I also went back to Kishineff as a pardoned offender. And my year in exile ended with me being a more ardent revolutionist, a more determined fighter for freedom, a more conscious socialist, and a more pronounced hater of capitalism, all because of my status as a poor worker.







Jack Kant, age 23
New York, 1909



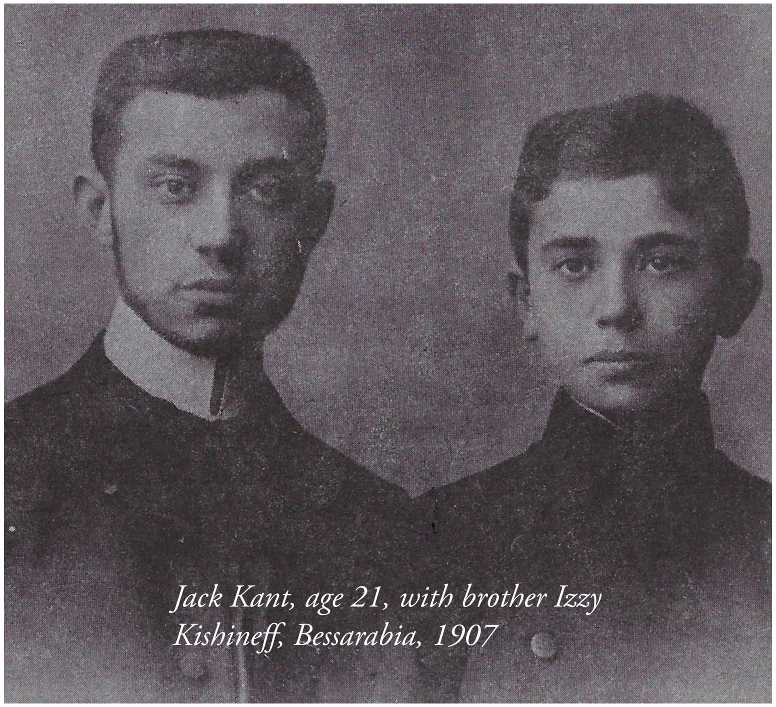
Jack Kant, age 93, with Minnie Kant
West Palm Beach, 1979



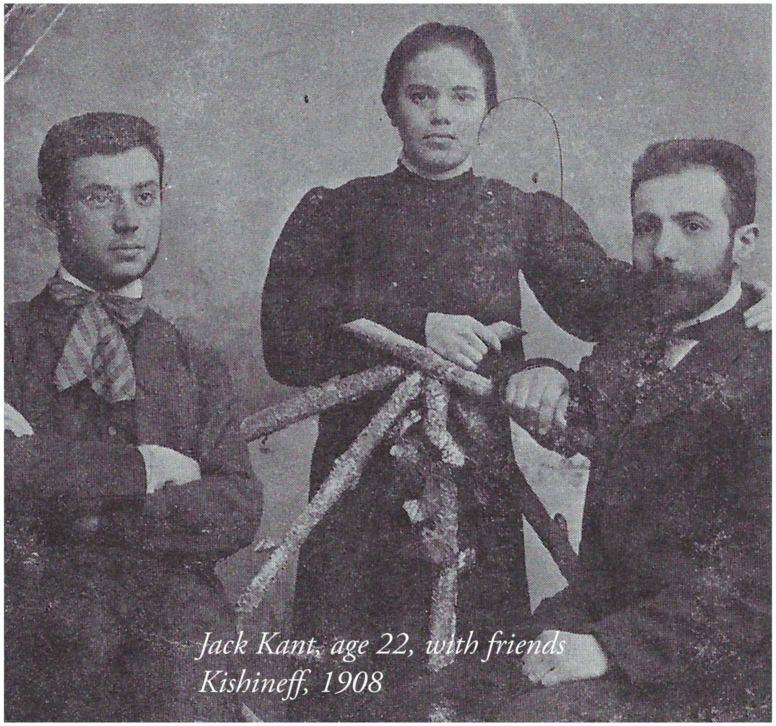
Jack Kant, age 17
Paris, 1903



Jack Kant, age 20, with friend
Odessa, 1906



Jack Kant, age 21, with brother Izzy
Kishineff, Bessarabia, 1907



Jack Kant, age 22, with friends
Kishineff, 1908